Maria Todorova

Conversion to Islam as a trope in Bulgarian historiography, fiction and film

Maria Todorova looks at three genres to evaluate the different forms in which a nation's memory is stored and collectivized: Analysing academic narratives, fiction writing and films in the Bulgarian context, she dissects the ways in which history is constructed, how meaning is deciphered by the audience and how memory constantly oscillates between private and collective memory.

A personal note frames this paper. In the spring of 1999, while teaching a course on Balkan history at Harvard University, I was invited by Anastasia Karakasidou to introduce a Bulgarian film in the series of Balkan historical films she had organized at Wellesley College. For lack of any other, but also because I thought it would provide a good basis for discussion on both national interpretations of an imperial past as well as lead us to contemporary issues (it was the beginning of the bombing campaign against Yugoslavia with the news and pictures of refugees streaming out of Kosovo), I showed the film *Time of Violence.* Set in the 17th century, it portrays the alleged mass conversion of Bulgarians in one part of the Rhodope mountains. The show itself went well but a few days later the student newspaper published the vehement and denunciatory protest of a young woman, a Turk from Bulgaria, who felt deeply offended by the display of what she thought a hyper−nationalist film. Sensitive as I am to both excesses of nationalism in general, and to the plight of the Bulgarian Turks in the 1980s in particular, I admit that I did not expect such a reaction, and was genuinely surprised at what seemed to me to be an emotional though understandable overreaction. Part of it was that I had introduced the show with what I believed was the proper historicizing and contextualization, and this proleptic act on my part kept me from apprehending the coming reaction. I should have known better. Of course, much as we would like to be understood for what we say (when we are the authors) or for how we interpret (when we are the mediators), the process of reception has its own laws, described with fancy terms like intertextuality, the dialogical principle etc., or with less fancy ones, like that a reader simply comes to the text with one's own existential and intellectual baggage. And yet, is there something immanent in the text (whether verbal or visual), that always elicits or unleashes a certain reaction (even though the degree might be different)? Is this something locked and frozen within a discursive system that gives it meaning, in this case the system being nationalism? If memory is the interplay between repetition and recollection, and history, in the words of Patrick Hutton, is an art of memory, what are the identifiable markers that constitute the ensemble of collective memory? More significantly, how are they transmitted, and how are they received? Historians of commemoration have concluded that the latter is "a form of mnemonics for the modern age, self−consciously designed by leaders of the nation−state to prompt the desired recall, and so to rouse latent

emotional energies."[1] But do the intentions correspond to the result, in a word, does it make us "remember" in the same way?

I would like to analyze some of this on the basis of Bulgarian material by looking into a trope which seems to provide an unbroken continuity over time and over genres: conversions to Islam. In different sections of my paper, I am looking at the academic narrative and its functions, at fiction, and, finally, at film. There are two major points that are valid for all of these three types of narrative. One (and it concerns primarily but not exclusively the academic output) is how different sources become subordinated to the same goal, how Ottoman tax registers, *sicil* entries, petitions, *fetvas*, lists of categories of population groups, or Orthodox hagiography, chronicles, marginalia, folklore, or foreign diplomatic and travel accounts, are all made to speak the same language. The other, and it is the one that here interests me most, is how one source, and the same trope, even when functioning in the same discursive *longue durée* of nationalism, does not necessarily bear the same meaning and the same message. The meaning and, by extension, the memory, as I hope to show, is produced in the space between authorial intention and reception.

The narrative line of the movie *Time of Violence* revolves around the story of a priest who, faced with a bloody and systematic attempt on the part of the Ottoman authorities to force the population into Islam, in the end leads part of his flock to voluntary conversion in order to survive. The film is based on the novel *Time of Parting,* which itself is based partly on a chronicle describing the 17th century islamization of the Rhodope Bulgarians, the predecessors of today's Pomaks. Let me, therefore, first turn to this very important source and its interpretation.

The Source

The so called "chronicle of Metodi Draginov" is a brief witness story, written by one local priest from the village of Korova, of the forceful mass Islamization of Bulgarians in the Chepino region of the Western Rhodope mountains in the 17th century. It was first published in 1870 in Vienna, in Bulgarian, by Stefan Zakhariev, a patriotic writer, scholar, collector of manuscripts, and journalist as part of his "Geographic−historical−statistical description of the Tatar−Pazardhik *kaza*."[2] He had finished the manuscript in 1866, and died shortly after its publication. In his brief introductory annotation to the story, Zakhariev explained that he had found it as an entry at the end of a half−preserved prayer−book written on vellum. The original prayer−book has not survived. It was considered to have disappeared at the time of the arrest of Stefan Zakhariev's son − Khristo − in Istanbul in 1874, although clearly not all items of the collections were lost, and some later found their way into the collection of the Russian Academy of Sciences in St. Petersburg.[3] The contents of the story are pretty straightforward: during the rule of Sultan Mehmed IV, his troops passed through the Rhodope mountains. The Greek Orthodox metropolitan of Plovdiv, Gavriil, angry at the Bulgarians for refusing to pay their church tax, reported on them to the sultan, maintaining that they were organizing a rising against the sultan's authority. As a result, a punitive expedition, headed by one Mehmet pasha, was sent to the Chepino villages. The population was threatened, and then converted, and the chronicle has preserved the names of the islamicized priests and some local leaders; there was violence, and numerous churches and monasteries were ruined. The whole operation took place between St.George's Day and the Feast of the Assumption, i.e. between May and August. The year given in the story is 1600 (a date which historians analyzing the chronicle corrected to refer to the time

of the Venetian−Ottoman war of 1660−1669 over the island of Crete).

In general surveys of Bulgarian literary history, this chronicle has been considered an important monument, one of the very few original texts from the 17th century. While already contemporaries of Zakhariev's publication (among them distinguished scholars like Marin Drinov, Konstantin Ire_ek, Romeo Cholakov) recognized that the language of the text was modernized, as well as that there were factological discrepancies, this was attributed to the lack of professionalism, particularly of the necessary philological precision, on the part of Zakhariev. However, the provenance of the text from the 17th century was not in doubt. Very early on also, scholars had noticed the similarities between Metodi Draginov's chronicle, and another two chronicles which described the same events. One is the so−called Batkunski chronicle published in 1893. It was supposed to be a Bulgarian translation of the Greek translation of a lost and undated Bulgarian original made a couple of decades previously by a Greek doctor in Plovdiv.[4] The other is the Belovo chnonicle (*Belovski letopis*) which exists in two versions. The first version was published in 1898, and was dated by its publisher Nachov from the middle of the 18th century to the beginning of the 19th century.[5] Since this chronicle is the only one whose original has been preserved in the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, it was definitively analyzed and dated by Khristo Kodov in his authoritative 1969 inventory of Slavic manuscripts as coming from the beginning of the 19th century.[6] The second version was published by Petir Mutafchiev, who explains that this was a copy from a destroyed or lost book of the priest Georgi from Belovo who was killed during the April Uprising of 1876. The original of the copy, however, has not been preserved.[7] While all scholars recognized the similarities between the three chronicles, their genealogical relationship was not convincingly determined. The historian Petir Petrov, who in 1965 offered the most detailed historical analysis, concluded very generally that all three chronicles have as their base a common source.[8] In more specialized historical circles, either in unofficial discussions or in university lectures, the chronicle of Metodi Draginov, while not at the very center of debates, clearly produced polarized evaluations, with some professors using it as the ultimate argument about mass conversions and evidence for a sustained policy of assimilation, and others refusing to credit it as a reliable source and describing it as a 19th−century forgery.

In 1984, the literary historian Iliya Todorov published what has since become the definitive verdict on the chronicle. Todorov gave the source a close linguistic reading, and while he carefully reasoned that the language itself cannot be sufficient proof for or against its authenticity, the dialectological, orthographic and onomastic analysis prompted him to conclude that the source was too remote from the language of 17th century documents, and that it reflected 19th century forms and conventions. Moreover, the factological analysis exposed obvious inconsistencies, among them that the Ottoman documentation clearly shows the villages of the Chepino region as parts of a vak_f at least from the middle of the 16th century and on into the 19th century, while the chronicle describes them as voynuk villages. Todorov also pointed out the clear anti−Greek feeling emanating from the document which also reflects an anachronism: the ecclesiastical conflicts between Bulgarians and Greeks hardly predated the latter half of the 18th century, and become wide−spread only in the 19th. The most important contribution of Iliya Todorov, however, was to critically and historically situate the chronicle of Metodi Draginov in the general oeuvre of Stefan Zakhariev. He first succeeded in proving that Zakhariev was familiar with the Belovo chronicle, and had reported on it in a newspaper article from 1860. His conclusion was that the

chronicle of Metodi Draginov "was nothing else but a literary arrangement based on the really existing Belovo chronicle." By carefully juxtaposing it to the two preserved versions of the Belovo chronicle, Todorov concluded that, most likely, Zakhariev had used a lost common predecessor of the two versions.[9] But Todorov went further in his analysis. He demonstrated that Zakhariev often resorted to such literary devices. In the same edition in which he printed the chronicle, he also published the inscription of a marble plaque he had found in a fortress in the same region, which was supposed to date from the 10th century. In this case, the fake is pretty obvious although it did spawn several archeological expeditions. On at least three other occasions, and in other works, Zakhariev produced what Iliya Todorov carefully defines as "literary mystifications." These were documents, compiled from different written sources and also based on oral tradition, and enriched by facts and twists of the author himself, that he would pass for his copies of lost "originals." As Iliya Todorov's analysis demonstrates, Metodi Draginov's chronicle was a close literary version of the authentic 19th−century Belovo chronicle. The motive of the Greek metropolitan's betrayal was also not invented by Zakhariev. There existed the legend that in the early 16th century, Sultan Selim, incited by the Greek Patriarch, took off to Tirnovo, ruined the Bulgarians lands, destroyed the churches, and converted the survivors to Islam. The origins of this legend has not been determined yet but it is documented in written form in the 1792 history of Spiridon, and from there made its way into later copies of Paisii's history.[10] There was also an oral legend about Chepino implicating the local Greek hierarch which had been reported *qua* legend in the local press in 1860.[11] The motives of Stefan Zakhariev were obvious. He was working in a period when the cultural struggle for emancipation among the Bulgarians had reached a critical degree, and he was totally engrossed in this struggle. The 1860s, in particular, saw the culmination of the ecclesiastical conflict with the Greek Constantinople patriarchate, and all intellectual efforts were directed at proving the "rights" of the Bulgarians to an independent church. That an independent church for the Bulgarians meant independent national existence was correctly suspected both by the Patriarchate (which therefore opposed it), and by the Porte (which backed it in the hope of placating the growing radicalization of the political movement). It was also a time when history was the foremost legitimizer of nationhood in terms of "historic" versus "non−historic" nations. Zakhariev himself lamented in 1860 that "we do not have antiquities from which we can explore our bygone deeds so as to put together a detailed and true history of our past life." He ascribed this not to the lack of such antiquities which were plentiful but, on the one hand, to the ignorance of "our people whose national feelings are not developed" and who cannot, therefore, appreciate them and, on the other hand, to the poverty of the scholars who, even when interested, had not the means to research and acquire them.[12] Nor was Zakhariev alone in his endeavors, either at home or abroad. This was the height of romanticism which in the 18th and 19th centuries produced famous "mystifications"or outright "forgeries"in practically all European countries: France, Spain, Germany, Scotland, Italy, Russia, etc.[13] In the Bulgarian case, the classical and most successful case is the famous "Veda Slovena,"arguing for the existence of a whole Slavic pre−Homeric poetical cycle, but there are a number of others too.[14] In the context of this paper, it is important to see what this de−authentication or de−mystification of the Metodi Draginov chronicle achieves. The obvious one is that it cannot be used as an example of a 17th−century document, nor as a reliable witness account of a mass conversion. Does this, however, completely de−legitimize it as a historical source? It is in this context that one has to understand the heated debates about how to classify this document: whether to dismiss it as "primitive falsification" or insist on the delicate distinction

between "fake" or "forgery," and "literary mystification." Proponents of the latter view insist that, despite accretions or outright distortions, the document still is based on a number of real historical facts, and earlier written or oral information.[15] The problem with this is, of course, that any falsification is based on a number of real historical facts, and the more effective and trustworthy it is, the greater its accordance to historical fact. One the other hand, the ones who utilize "falsification" insist with a Puritanical zeal on purging these sources from the repertoire of historical argumentation altogether.[16] In the end, it seems to me that there is no profound cognitive difference between the categories "falsification" or "mystification." There is, however, a clear evaluative difference among authors who use one or the other category but this is a historiographical problem to which I will turn in the next section.

As for the "chronicle of Metodi Draginov," it is an authentic 19th−century artefact which, among other things, reflects and transmits perceptions about conversions. What is most important, the emotional center and emphasis of the story is not the conversion but the act of betrayal on the part of the Greek clergy, and this is what in the end produced the literary mystification. It is, therefore, an authentic historical source for the history of 19th−century ideas, and cultural and ecclesiastic struggles. Especially because of the intentionality and anti−Greek penchant of the document, the story of the conversion which only serves as a background, and is documented in a preserved and authentic early 19th−century chronicle, is a valid illustration of perceptions that were broadly shared in the 18th and 19th centuries, and were clearly based on popular legends that may or may not go back as early as the 17th century. However, when the chronicle was lifted from its politically activist mid−nineteenth−century context, and entered the realm of academic production where national historiography had a slightly different activist agenda, it was re−described, re−interpreted, or rather re−emphasized, and the background became the foreground, giving it a new positional meaning.

History and Historiography

The Polish historian Jerzy Topolski has pointed out that while the production of the historical narrative is to a large extent a re−description of one narrative (the one in the sources) to another (historiography), it should not be reduced to this re−description. He accordingly differentiates between epistemological and non−epistemological functions of historical sources. The conventional metaphors used for sources − "traces left by the past" as in a "hunting" metaphor, or "glass, window, lenses, mirror" as an allusion to the access into the "other" world, the world of the past as a totality − correspond to a theory of truth in which "sources are regarded by the historians as an element of the epistemological chain which gives them a more or less straight access to the past reality."[17] Topolski himself rejects the metaphor of access and, instead, refines the epistemological function of historical sources by employing the metaphor of the thread which, in his opinion, describes a limited or weak contact with reality without, at the same time, excluding the interpretation of the historiographic narrative in terms of the historian's non−epistemological construction. The latter is regrettably not elaborated on but it invokes the use of sources on the part of the historian not only as a stock of concrete data but also as an inspiration, as emotion, or as nourishment for the imagination.[18] It functions within what Topoloski has elsewhere called narrative totality, the medium in which individual sources of information loose their personality, and become imbued with the general content and tenor of the totality.[19]

Approached from this angle, the chronicle of Metodi Draginov need not be judged simply as a false trace, a broken mirror or a severed thread, or to put it differently, it will be judged as such only within the paradigm which posits it as an element in the epistemological chain that leads to a more or less straight access to past reality. But its excision from the body of the "narrative totality" does not necessarily change the tonality of the totality. Thus, Petir Petrov, one of the few professional historians directly and ardently implicated in the renaming campaign of the 1980s, and a long−term popularizer of the chronicle, left it out of the first volume of the second edition of his documents on conversions to Islam.[20] When the volume was published in 1987, it left the impression that Petrov had heeded, after all, Iliya Todorov's analysis. Instead, he included a newly translated (by Asparukh Velkov) document from the Oriental department of the National Library: an authentic *defter* of expenditures for newly converted Muslims in the period from June 1679 to May 1680. There were altogether 239 converts (193 men and 146 women), of whom 22 men and 2 women were specified to have converted during the Sultan's hunting. The title to the document is: "Islamization in Eastern Thrace during the Sultan's hunt." [21] The allusion to Metodi Draginov's chronicle was transparent. The chronicle may have been a late mystification or forgery but the real trace − the document − has been uncovered. The narrative totality was unharmed. Moreover, a year later, when Petrov published the second volume of the collection, he had recanted from what was seen as a "scholarly" weakness. The Metodi Draginov chronicle was back in, without a mention about its dating.[22] The general tenor of the narrative had also hardened. Where the abstract to the first volume mentioned that the documentation "gives the possibility to illustrate concretely the Bulgarian roots of the islamicized population in the Bulgarian lands," the second volume spoke of the "categorical way to demonstrate the big truth that the islamicized population in Bulgaria has Bulgarian origins and has always belonged to the Bulgarian people."

In the Bulgarian national historiographical context, the chronicle's function was somewhat different from the one which it was given at its inception. The anti−Greek element was de−emphasized or simply not noticed; it was the conversion that came to be highlighted. The social context for this was the process of nation−building, specifically the attempts at integration and homogenization of the population. It concerned first the Bulgarian speaking Muslim population (Bulgarian Muslims, or the so−called Pomaks), and its place in the newly independent state which at first did not attempt to integrate it but treated it as indistinguishable from the larger Muslim group. In all censuses of the late nineteenth century (1880, 1885, 1888) the Bulgarian speaking Muslims were entered under the heading "Turks." It was only in the 1905 census that a separate group − "Pomaks" − appeared. Beginning with the 1890s but especially during the 1920s and 1930s a sustained campaign in the press urged public opinion to discriminate between religious and ethnic allegiance, and to accept the Pomaks as part of the Bulgarian nation. This idea was most intensely espoused by a small educated elite among the Pomaks (principally teachers) who strove to elevate the economic and cultural level of their group, and to rescue it from its ever growing marginalization.

In 1937 the organization "Rodina" ("Motherland") was formed whose principal aim was to foster a Bulgarian ethnic consciousness among the Bulgarian Muslims. Its activities covered mostly the Central and Western Rhodopes; it proved unsuccessful in the Eastern Rhodopes. In the course of seven years the organization introduced Bulgarian language worship in the mosques, translated the Qur'an into Bulgarian, created a Bulgarian−Muslim establishment separate

from the Turkish, promoted the creation of a local elite by enrolling Bulgarian Muslims in secondary and higher education establishments. It also attempted to reform everyday life by casting away the traditional costume, by improving the lot of women, by ending the practice of circumcision. Most importantly, in 1942 it embarked on a campaign to change the names of the Bulgarian Muslims by promoting Bulgarian, although not Christian, names. It has been estimated that by September 1944, two thirds of the Pomak population in the Central Rhodopes had changed their names. Immediately after the war, the "Rodina" organization was dissolved, on the grounds of being a nationalistic Bulgarian, reactionary and racist formation. The Muslim names of the population were restored by 1945.

The "Rodina" movement of the 1930s and 1940s was regarded as a *revival* ("vizrazhdane") of the lost ethnic/national consciousness of the Bulgarian Muslim converts. This very concept and the accompanying discourse, as well as the geographic span and the character of its activities is very important to keep in mind when considering the obvious continuities with later assimilation campaigns directed at the Pomaks (in the 1960s and the 1970s), and the internationally much more publicized campaign directed at the Turkish speaking Muslims in Bulgaria, the so called ethnic Turks, in the latter half of the 1980s. Although the activities of "Rodina" are less than controversial, and its assessments even more so, ranging from limitless idealization to complete repudiation, the substance of its efforts, the evaluative element aside, can be seen as an attempt to bridge existing religious boundaries through linguistic unity, and to replace or at least subordinate the heretofore dominant religious identity by ethnic/national consciousness. At least in its initial conception it was essentially a grassroots effort to blend with the dominant majority and thus acquire the mechanisms of social vertical mobility (despite the utilization of sometimes questionable methods, and although it soon came to be used by the authorities).[23] This is the proper background for understanding the rhetoric, motivations, and mechanisms of the renaming campaign launched against the ethnic Turks in the 1980s but in a completely different regional and global geopolitical context.

This is also the proper context for understanding the new "valency" that the chronicle of Metodi Draginov acquired after the creation of independent Bulgaria. Its great value lay in its witness character and the rare genre that it represented − a chronicle − but it was only one in many sources on conversions that were being uncovered and publicized, and these sources all did have the epistemological function of gaining access to past reality. Conversion to Islam as a historiographic trope can be thus interpreted as serving a particular internal social and political function. At the same time, it has to be assessed in view of the agonistic field between Bulgarian (and, in general, Balkan) and Turkish national historiographies, especially in their respective attempts to explain the Ottoman conquest, the long−term Ottoman presence and the sizeable Muslim population in the Balkans. What is at stake is the attempt to prove the "blood−kinship" of the contested groups to the larger nations in the area. Turkish historiography, or at least a significant part of it, has focused on the size of the Turkic/Turkish masses arriving from Anatolia as a principal factor for Ottoman success. The history of the Ottoman Empire, in this view, could be re−interpreted as the history of migrations of great masses of people who had a numerical superiority over the indigenous population. In this interpretation the conscious and planned colonization of the Balkans on the part of the Sultan's government held a central place.[24]

In contrast, Balkan historiography has made considerable efforts to refute, or rather relativize, the significance of Ottoman colonization in explaining both the success of the Ottoman conquest, and the significant size of the Muslim population by the last centuries of Ottoman rule. It pays due attention to the population transfers from Anatolia to the Balkans between the 14th and 16th centuries, and the character and main geographic areas of the Muslim colonization but demonstrates that the colonization did not significantly change the demography of the peninsula.[25] Conversely, the first reliable statistical data from the 19th century, while preserving the predominance of the non−Muslims, demonstrated considerable changes in the ratio between Muslims and non−Muslims. The explanation for this has been seen in the processes of conversions to Islam, especially during the 17th and 18thcenturies.[26] It is widely accepted nowadays that the vast majority of the Balkan conversions were individual ones, although this particular point, whether the conversions were the result of a centrally planned and systematically implemented policy of assimilation or, on the other hand, whether they were an individually initiated policy of social, political, and religious adaptation, was itself the object of internal debates or differences within Bulgarian historiography. The non−enforced or so−called voluntary conversions can be viewed as the result of indirect pressure or coercion (economic and social, but not administrative) with the goal of attaining social re−categorization. It is moreover the individual and predominantly single character of these conversions which explains the fact that the integration into the new religious and social milieu was accompanied with a subsequent loss of the native tongue. The exceptions are the cases where these conversions occurred en masse in larger or smaller groups, irrespective of whether they were voluntary or enforced: Bosnia, Albania, the Rhodopes (the Pomaks), Macedonia (the Torbesh), Serbia (the Gorani).

There are two things that ought to be mentioned in this cursory overview of Bulgarian historiography, especially after World War II. Firstly, despite the fact that the treatment of conversions can be inscribed as a whole within the overarching framework of the national paradigm, it was and continues to be far from unanimous in the details. There have been passionate and, often, contentious debates on the general evaluation of the Ottoman period, and the problem of conversions in particular. Some of these found their way in print, others were well remembered and influential oral debates; finally, even in the absence of debates, the coexistence of diametrically opposite approaches, evaluations and even rhetoric gives a relevant idea of the deep differencs.[27] It bears reminding that, among others, the definitive exposing of Metodi Draginov's chronicle as a literary mystification by Iliya Todorov took place during these decades.[28]

The second point to be stressed is that the de−legitimization of the narrative totality does not de−legitimize the individual sources; it simply absolves them of the general content inscribed in them by the totality. The thousands of sources that were published in documentary collections or smaller publications, especially in the 1980s, in an effort to provide a historical base for the lamentable assimilation process, may not any longer be used as proofs for the alleged assimilation politics of the Ottoman state. They continue to be, nonetheless, individual statements on the incontrovertible existence of a conversion process, which are subject to different interpretations. Moreover, they too, like works of historiography, were of uneven quality. Some were substandard propaganda editions[29]; others were of high academic quality, and have not lost their value even today. An example of the latter kind is the volume of newly translated documents from the collection of the National

Library which was initiated and carried out during the 1980s, and received the special financial support of the Ministry for Science.[30] The preface to this volume was written by Strashimir Dimitrov, the undisputed doyen of Ottoman studies in Bulgaria. The volume itself presented 239 documents, all from the Oriental collection of the Sofia National Library, grouped in four genres: a) registers; b) *fermans*, petitions, reports; c) *sicils*; d) *fetvas*. The detailed Janissary registers from the 16th and 17th century give interesting detail on the span of the economic activities of the Janissary corps. They also allow a correction of Hammer's assertion, which has become dominant in the secondary literature, that by 1639 the practice of the *devshirme* was voided.[31] Since in very many cases the ethnic and/or local provenance was registered, there are numerous mentions of Bulgarians, Croats, Russians, Albanians, Bosnians, Hungarians, Circassians, Franks, Serbs, Greeks, etc. One can hardly quibble with the very cautious way Dimitrov phrased his conclusion, especially given the time and circumstances he was writing in: "I have not counted how many of the *ulüfeciyan* have been rendered as Bulgarians, Albanians, Serbs, Greeks, Hungarians, etc. Others will surely do this but it is clear, nonetheless, that there existed a constantly operating system for the absorption of people from different provinces and ethnic groups 'under the influence of Islam and the Turkish milieu.'"[32] Strashimir Dimitrov notes an interesting shift occurring in the 17*th* century. While in previous centuries strict measures were taken against runaways among the newly converted recruits, by the 17th century there was practically no case of attempted escape, clearly indicating that the *ocak* of the *acemio_lan* had become attractive, effectuating a social rise for the recruits. Instead, there were individual petitions from Christians asking to be converted to Islam and allowed to enter the Janissary corps or some other military detachment. The most interesting contribution of this volume may have been the introduction of a new genre of sources: individual petitions of local Christians who beg for admission to Islam, and ask for a variety of privileges: monetary help, new clothes, appointment to the military or the administration, etc. Over 130 such petitions were published. These were actually generic documents following a formulaic text, and were meant to begin financial transactions, sanctioning the petitions' material requests. The calculations of Dimitrov showed that the monetary help given to the "new Muslims" was very substantial: a newly converted young man received the equivalent of the annual salary of an *acemio_lan*; a family of converts consisting of a man, his wife, and child would receive a sum equal to the price of a house.[33] Of course, the implicit conclusion was that the Ottoman authorities, without officially condoning proselytism, were creating economic and social incentives for conversions. These documents, located within the narrative totality of reconstructing the islamization processes, had obviously not mere epistemological functions. They did "nourish the imagination" and they did "evoke emotions" (Topolski). But the point I wish to make is that these emotions were not necessarily the intended or expected ones. Here is an "oral history" contribution: In the 1980s, I was teaching Balkan and Ottoman history at the University of Sofia. In seminars, when trying to get across to my students the motivations for converting, I would jokingly make the analogy with entering the Communist party. In the climate of these years, this was a calculated and more or less tolerable risk. What was totally not tolerated was open public criticism of the policies against the Turks, the infamous renaming process. There, one could resort to metaphors, to body language, to intonation, in a word, to the famous East European "periphrastic." The above−mentioned "petitions" for conversion to Islam were for me a very useful tool. If one could make the logical analysis and conclusions about the fictitiousness of these "voluntary" and "enthusiastic" petitions of the past, one thereby was *ipso facto* subverting the legitimacy of the contemporary "voluntary" and "enthusiastic"

petitions which the ethnic Turks were forced to sign after 1985. The logical proposition both upheld and undermined the official line, and its emotive power or meaning came from its extratextual baggage.[34] It is in this context that I would wish to contemplate briefly on another type of historical memory, namely historiographical memory. It is only understandable and justifiable that some sort of revisionism would set in after 1989, and that it would affect the highly contentious and politicized issue of the Ottoman past. In this respect, an interesting article was published in 1998 by one of the best Ottomanist Evgenii Radushev, himself one of the editors of the above−mentioned volume of Ottoman sources on the islamization processes. The article, dealing with demographic and ethno−religious processes in the Western Rhodopes between the 15th and 18th centuries is subtitled "an attempt to reassess fixed historiographical models." It is Radushev's central contention that the documentation coming from the Ottoman archives, newly accessible to Bulgarian researchers, "makes it imperative to speak of a process of islamization, instead of periodically carried out terrorist acts of mass imposition of the new religion."[35] But this, as I have tried to argue all along, has been a strong and convincingly argued thesis all throughout the postwar period, and especially by Strashimir Dimitrov. As even Machiel Kiel, no sympathizer of "fixed historiographical models," recently acknowledged, "thirty years ago, Strashimir Dimitrov had shown on the basis of *cizye* registers from the Western Rhodopes, that islamization was not the consequence of one mass coercive campaign but rather of a long−term process."[36] Radushev's otherwise quite excellent contribution is to strengthen and refine this thesis but he certainly is not its pioneer. His valuable insights based on new sources about one particular region −− the Mesta valley −− refer, in particular, to refuting the thesis of the predominantly nomadic Turkmen colonization. Instead, he shows that the majority of the Anatolian population which settled in this area in the 15th century consisted of skilled agriculturalists, especially rice−croppers.[37] Very important also is his conclusion that, unlike the dominant view in historiography maintaining that cities were leading in the process of conversions, the area of Nevrokop clearly demonstrates that this was a process going on intensively at the level of the village. In this particular respect he is able to emphasize the interesting role of the Janissary corps as a motive for conversions. There are a number of cases of Janissaries who have been recruited outside of the *devshirme* system. These were already Muslims of at least the second generation, i.e. Pomaks, something reminiscent of the Bosnian case. Other converts explicitly indicated that they would like to change their faith in order to enter the corps, something Radushev convincingly interprets as a desire for recategorization from the *reaya* to the *askeri* status. Again, convincing as it is, this interpretation was not new: it had been already forwarded by Strashimir Dimitrov in the above−mentioned preface. On the other hand, Radushev usefully draws the attention on the role of Sufi Islam by introducing the work of H. T. Norris and others, an area of research which is only beginning in Bulgarian historiography.[38] From a completely different angle, Radushev's latest article is not only a valuable contribution to Bulgarian historiography; in itself, it will serve as an interesting source in future historiographical works, for what and how it tells us about the social and intellectual context in which historical works were produced, about the intellectual climate and intergenerational academic relations, in a word, it will be an apt illustration about the problems of historiographical memory.

I am perfectly aware that I may be accused of "defending" a past historiographical project, or at least some of its representatives. This does not matter. It still validates my point that we remember differently, and how and what we remember is predicated on our tastes, outlooks, and conscious or

unconscious decisions to filter memory. The more concrete and finer point to make, of course, is that historians should be imbued with a greater degree of humbleness when they interpret motives, i.e. when they venture into the history of *mentalité* without the requisite types of sources (personal letters, diaries, confessions, etc.). And even these are hardly unequivocal materials as the historiography of regions where such testimonies abound, has demonstrated (in particular, attempts to discern *longue durée* mentality cycles). New documentation of the type that is usually found in Ottoman archives (registers, government documentation, judiciary sources) may allow us to make more plausible hypotheses but it is also high time to become more critical of Ottoman archival fetishism.[39]

The Novel

As we have seen in the preceding section, the positioning of a source within a narrative totality − historiography −− fine−tunes it so as to adjust it to the general melodic line. At the same time, there is no evidence of a direct link between the development of narrative totalities in historiography, belles lettres, let alone film. In 1964, the writer Anton Donchev published the historical novel *Vreme razdelno* (Time of Parting).[40] The novel was written in a gripping prose and was, in my opinion, one of the best historical novels of the conventional genre written by a Bulgarian author.[41] The novel is written in the form of consecutive excerpts from two contemporary chronicles or first person witness accounts: one written by the Bulgarian Orthodox monk Aligorko; the other by a French nobleman known as "the Venetian" who had fallen captive to the Turks and had converted to Islam, had learned Bulgarian in captivity, and was serving as interpreter during the conversion campaign. The story of Aligorko is without any doubt a fictional and elaborated rendering of the basics of the chronicle of Metodi Draginov. Although it is easy to place this novel in the historical context of the 1960s, and see it as a talented legitimation of the coming assimilation campaigns launched against the Pomaks that culminated in the early 1970s, I would suggest that this interpretation is too rigid and mechanistic. What follows is not an exhaustive and *lege artis* literary analysis of the text. I have neither consulted the reception of the novel by literary critics or the public, nor tried to reconstruct the authorial motives through interviews. Instead, this is a rather pedestrian reading of the literary text by one historian in order to highlight how the conversion trope has been used, and what message it sent off at the time, at least to this reader. I could only say in my defense that this would be the literary analysis employed at the school level, and that this book's audience would be mostly school youth. An additional explanation about the 1960s is in order. While it is true that there was mounting pressure to integrate the Pomaks, as far as the community of the so called ethnic Turks goes, this was a time when they still enjoyed the affirmative action privileges installed in the first decade of communism, and which were lifted only subsequently and gradually.[42] It was also a period of general liberal "thaw" which lasted until the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

In my reading, this was certainly not a piece that was meant to, or even possibly could, cultivate ethnic hatred. It did not employ any ethnic or national stereotypes; moreover, it did not paint national types but human types. If one were to go down the list of protagonists, the principal villain is Karaibrahim, a Bulgarian Janissary recruited by the *devshirme*, whose overzealousness is at the bottom of the human tragedy. Suleyman aga, the ruler of the valley, who falls victim in the end, is cultivated, wise and just, a seemingly relaxed man with a sense of humor who drinks coffee, and makes a point of having knocked down a Janissary. He despises Karaibrahim as someone who "thinks he can set

the world to rights" and is "like a horse in blinkers." Suleyman's own justice is cruel and despotic, and his religion is order, not human empathy. But this is not a depiction of the standard Turkish administrator. Suleyman is the descendant of Bulgarian aristocrats who have ruled over the valley from times immemorial, and have converted to Islam preserving their domains. The Grand Vizier, the Albanian Ahmed Köprülü, is a desperate misanthrope. The emphasis in the Sultan's portrait is on his "round Russian face, the face of a kindly man" born of a Slav, Pole or Russian, and whose personal tragedy is that he cannot summon the courage to execute his brothers. The only "true" Anatolian Turk is the *yürük* Ismail, the kindest and most humane character in the novel, alongside the martyred Galushko, the father of Karaibrahim.

Among the Christian Bulgarians, Manol is the indubitable hero, the manly man, the material of which folk songs and legends are made. Yet, he is "a hard, grim man, perhaps cruel." He cannot betray, he has honor and responsibility; but he also cannot adjust, he does not know the word compromise. His female counterpart is the centenarian Srebra, the leader of the devastated refugees who founds a new Bulgarian village up the mountain. She is wise and kind, yet she, too, does not understand deviation; she cannot pardon but actively seeks vengeance. It is the Christlike figure of Galoushko, the father to most of the main characters (Karaibrahim, Elitsa, Goran, Manol as a foster child), that articulates the all−encompassing philosophy of a kind of pantheism: God is in everything, he lives in the grasses, in the beasts, in all men, good and evil. In the end, Galoushko, with his final refusal to accept the True Faith and, at the same time, his reluctance to engage in a struggle and resort to vengeance, becomes the symbol of the Christian sacrifice.

And yet, if one were to ask who is celebrated in this book, the answer would not be the obvious heroes but the two chroniclers, both converts, both compromisers, both in their own ways anti−heroes. The "Venetian," the man who no longer knows whether he is a French nobleman who remembers he has lived in the Rhodopes, or a Rhodope man who remembers that he has lived in France, is the paradigm of what it means to be uprooted from locale, from religion, from language, from class, and all of this several times in the course of his life. But it is he who becomes the keeper of the torch in the end. Father Aligorko is the other complex character in the book who is looking for the middle road. True, at moments he is made to speak with the somewhat anachronistic voice of a century later when, during the 18th century, Bulgarian began to slowly displace Christian and Orthodox as the premier self−identification, or even with the voice of two centuries later, when at the end of the 19th century Bulgarianness was seen as the common ground to overcome the abyss between Bulgarian speaking Moslems and Christians. And yet, just like with the "Venetian," the strongest message coming from this character is the assertion of life.

But enough of defending the book at face value, and with a rather simplistic literary analysis. I would further maintain that the conversion trope as a well domesticated form served as a mold for new material and a new message. The whole story could be reinterpreted as an allegorical narrative about power and tolerance, about political fanaticism and existential compromise, taking stark choices in life and politics, about law and order, about despotism and arbitrariness, about heroism and sacrifice, about lust and love, with a very strong and decided contemporary relevance. At least, this is how I read the novel at the time. Nor is this necessarily an extravagant interpretation. Vera Mutafchieva's historical novel about Cem Sultan which came out three years after *Time of Parting*, and in the same intellectual atmosphere, was understood

by many intellectuals as a metaphoric autobiographical reminiscence on the fate of uprooted emigres, triggered by the recent defection of her brother to France.[43] The idea that there is no middle road, that one cannot stand aside, that one has to choose, had very clear resonance with the rhetoric of the dominant ideology; moreover, the incantatory repetition of the right/left choice in several instances in the book clearly made the switch into another symbolic code, that of modern politics.

All of this is not to say that Anton Donchev's novel has to be understood only or even mainly as an allegory. There is little doubt that the author himself shared in the ethos of the integrated nation, although not through violent means. My point is that the novel can *also* be read as an allegory and, depending this time not on the authorial intentions (whatever they are) but on the intentions of the reader and the general discursive field in which the text is launched, a meaning is imparted onto the text which is produced in the common social space and through a complex internal dialogue between the independent text, once it is severed from its creator, and the equally independent and different intellectual world of the reader with his/her idiosyncratic lens.

Erving Goffman's notion of *keying* can be useful in this instance: "the set of conventions by which a given activity, one already meaningful in terms of some primary framework, is transformed into something patterned on this activity but seen by the participants to be something quite else." This process of transcription may only slightly alter the activity but it utterly changes what it is a participant would say was going on. "A keying, then, when there is one, performs a crucial role in determining what it is we think is really going on."[44] True, Goffman insists that the process of transcription should be conscious and open, that the participant in the activity is meant to know that a systematic alteration is involved, and that this alteration should be indicated by cues −− temporal and spatial brackets. In our case, we could say that the obvious bracketing of the alteration is consciously avoided given the political conjuncture, and is relegated to the space at the receiver's end and to his/her initiative.

The Film

The film *Time of Violence* was shot in 1986, and was released the next year. It did not reach the broad Bulgarian audience, however, until after 1990 when it was shown both on the screen and in a televised version. In view of the growing dominance of the media, especially television, much attention has been paid lately to the problem of whether and how these new visual genres modify the dominant view of history produced heretofore by historians. Marc Ferro urges us to seek in a film not merely the illustration, confirmation, or contradiction of another knowledge − that of written tradition, and Robert Rosenstone wants us to see historical film not in terms of how it compares to written history but also how its own rules of representation govern its recounting of the past.[45] It has to be said already from the outset that *Time of Violence* belongs to the genre of traditional costume dramas,and falls largely under the category of what Rosenstone describes as popular historical films. Rosenstone continues: "Popular historical films, that is, those which might carry historical consciousness of a postliterate culture, are historically shallow and visually uninteresting. [They] suffer from same problem as certain sorts of 'old−fashioned' history. [They] suffer from both intellectual and aesthetic amnesia."[46] Attempting to be a moving historical epic, *Time of Violence*does not present, therefore, the fortuitous material which allows us to contemplate

on the links between film and history. On the other hand, precisely because of these weaknesses, it makes my task easier. Being essentially a costume drama, and very consciously pitching itself as an illustration to the text of the book, all that was said before about Anton Donchev's novel applies to a great extent to the film. And yet, there are some differences.

When the film was released in 1987, it was shown at the Cannes film festival, and received some positive reviews in France, Italy, and Belgium.[47] In Bulgaria itself, it was shown only for a limited time in Sofia, the speculation being that the authorities wanted to avoid an intensification of the ethnic conflict.[48] They might have also wanted to prevent foreign journalistic coverage, and accusations that they were using the medium of cinema for propaganda purposes. That they were doing it is beyond doubt, of course. In the few cases I know of students in the lower grades who did see the film through organized school visits, the children were supposed to see the film as a literal illustration, a kind of fictional documentary. The fact remains, however, that it was only after 1990, when measures were taken to reverse the renaming process (1985−1989), and the potential for ethnic confrontation subsided, that the film was shown to the broad public, and to great acclaim. It was also released in a televised and more detailed version. In this period, it was also dubbed in Italian and shown in Italy under the title "In the name of the faith," and the English soundtrack was released at about the same time.[49]

Given the timing of its making and release, at the height of the assimilation campaign against the Turks, is it correct to see the film as much more politically implicated than the book? This is surely how the student at Wellesley perceived it. And I myself have been arguing all along that the positioning of a work often confers upon it as much meaning as the author. But, again, the answer is more complicated. Cinematographers could not but recognize the potentials of the novel to be turned into an attractive screenplay bringing together three tried and truly popular cinema genres: the combat movie, the sex and rape drama, and the religious epic. When Lyudmil Staikov, the film director, and himself one of the screenwriters (the others being Georgi Danailov, Mikhail Kirkov, and Radoslav Spasov) produced the film, he had on board almost every big actor's name from the world of cinema and theater: Iosif Sirchadzhiev, Rusi Chanev, Ivan Kristev, Anya Pencheva, Kalina Stefanova, Stefka Berova, Vasil Mikhailov, Momchil Karamitev, Konstantin Kotsev, Todor Peev, Bogomil Simeonov, etc. In the two decades that separated the publication of the book from the release of the film, however, they could not receive the support for a mega−production. The opportune moment came with the "revival" process in the mid−1980s when, I suspect (although this can be proven only after looking at the archives of the cinematography and the Ministry of culture), someone managed to persuade somebody to support a "patriotic" venture.[50] Using the political conjuncture for support is certainly not confined to the former communist world, and the complex question about political complicity in the production of knowledge (or emotions) has yet to be properly described and theorized (the whole evaluation of the discipline of "Sovietology" falls under this rubric but there are comparable problems raised in the field of Ottoman studies whenever and to the extent at which the Turkish government is behind academic ventures, etc.). This is certainly not meant to alleviate responsibility but to complicate the analysis of the film's reception.

Moreover, when the film was broadly shown after 1990, it received the imprimatur of popular approval. What accounts for this, given that specialized film critics did not consider it a great achievement in any way?[51] Is it, as a superficial and hasty explanation would have it, that it fit in with a heightened

nationalistic mood? Not necessarily. My evidence in this respect is highly impressionistic, and it does not pretend to have any kind of sociological validity but there are also no surveys about the reception of the film that one could step on in order to make a more generalizable statement. I have interviewed at random young people (mostly from Sofia, and all well educated) who have liked the film, and my impression is that one of the reasons for their approval is that, ironically enough, the film came with a kind of "liberal" and even "dissident" pedigree. These young people did not ask themselves when the film was produced, but were impressed that it was not widely released during the "totalitarian" period. Thus, all those elements which I pointed out in the analysis of the novel − the celebration of compromise, the appreciation of life over religion and strict principles (read ideology), the dignity in resisting arbitrary rule and violence, the lack of overt ethnic stereotyping (was not the culprit of the only explicit rape scene in the film, I was told, a Bulgarian?) − were seen (in a, granted, rather naive fashion) as reasons for the "suppression" of the film. It also helped that the actor playing Karaibrahim− Iosif Sirchadzhiev, an excellent theatrical actor, the son of an outstanding theater director, and of Jewish decent − had become a prominent political figure in the UDF (Union of Democratic Forces), at the time the opposition and nowadays the ruling party.

A last and brief reflection on the power of film. Should it bear, because of the potency of its medium and the extent of its outreach, a larger portion of responsibility? Again, this is a question for sociologists and historians of cinema but I would like to invoke the exchange on this problem that occurred between a professional historian (Eric Foner) and a celebrated director (John Sayles). Film, Foner contended, "was a brilliant example of manipulation of the highest order." "While the movie is happening," Sayles replied, "and I think that's an important point about movies. They exist during those two hours. If you make them, you hope that they have some echo, but the only thing you really have to do for the audience to buy in is to be true to the world you create for those two hours. If it's a world in which people have superhuman powers and can jump higher and faster − if you set that up early and stay true to it − then people will buy it."[52] But, then, this last and brief reflection may be just my way of finding a justification for showing the film.

Conclusion

There are obvious concluding points to be made. This is in way a cautionary tale about the dangers of overinterpreting the permanence and inflexibility of sources, tropes and their message. Instead, the emphasis is on the variability of meaning, depending on one's position in the chronotope. This positional meaning, on its part, derives its strength partly from the power of an established image or trope, and is legitimized through the refracted light of the latter's strength. Another related point is to question the posited absolute power of national(ist) entrepreneurs, and the respective manipulability of any historical message. As we have seen, there are more possibilities and niches for subversion than is occasionally assumed.

Finally, to end where I started, I wonder whether, had I had the time to say all this before the screening of the film at Wellesley College, it would have convinced the student and prevented her reaction. But, of course, this is an illusion. After all, it would have been only an extension of my proleptic prologue, and its persuasive power would have hinged as much on the quality of the argumentation as on the positionality of the recipient. Clearly, although we might possibly both agree on the epistemological evaluation of the sources

and the works, their non−epistemological functions would be very different in our respective visions. In addition, I have not yet squarely addressed the space between us where the meaning is created in a silent dialogue. It is not only that we have approached the same material with different "frames."[53] The space in−between is one that, according to me, becomes an apt illustration of the meeting of memory and history or, as Kerwin Klein puts it more precisely, between the historical imagination and the memorial consciousness.[54] I have come in with an analytical agenda, and am speaking essentially of a cognitive process. The student approached the event − the screening of the film − through the prism of her personal memory. As a form of awareness, as we are reminded by Lowenthal, memory is wholly and intensely personal.[55] Yet it is also, as Halbwachs definitively demonstrated, located within the conceptual structure of the community, i.e. it is intrinsically social or collective: "[th]hese various modes by which memories become associated result from the various ways in which people can become associated. We can understand each memory as it occurs in individual thought only if we locate each within the thought of the corresponding group. We cannot properly understand their relative strength and the ways in which they combine within individual thought unless we connect the individual to the various groups of which he is simultaneously a member."[56] And the social coordinates of the student's memory are deeply embedded in the communal experience of Bulgarian Turks in the 1980s.

For Amos Funkenstein, the relation between collective memory and individual memory corresponds to the Saussurian distinction between *langue* and *parole*: "Collective memory... like "language," can be characterized as a system of signs, symbols, and practices: memorial dates, names of places, monuments and victory arches, museums and texts, customs and manners, stereotype images... The individual's memory − that is, the act of remembering − is the instantiation of these symbols, analogous to "speech"; no act of remembering is like any other."[57] The student's memory narrative, as is usual with memories created by trauma, promises empowerment even when it cannot deliver justice. But, "pain inevitably lapses, and with it, as Friedrich Nietzsche suggested, real memory."[58] In the end, although we may not reach and probably should not seek a resolution, we can still achieve mutual understanding, by acknowledging our different referential ground.

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1 Patrick H. Hutton, *History as an Art of Memory*, Hanover and London: University Press of New England, 1993, XV.

2 Stefan Zakhariev, *Geografsko−istoriko−statistichesko opisanie na Tatarpazardzhishkata kaaza*, Vienna, 1870 (phototype edition and commentary, Sofia, 1973).

3 Iliya Todorov, "Letopisniyat razkaz na pop Metodi Draginov," *Starobilgarska literatura*, 16, 1984, 67, n.59.

4 Khristo P. Konstantinov, "Pisma or Rodopite. Pismo XIV. Istoricheski pregled na pokrainata Chepino," *Svoboda*, VII, 1070, 7 April 1893. Reprinted in Khr. P. Konstantinov, "Chepino (Edno bilgarsko kraishte v severozapadnite razkloneniya na Rodopskite planini)," *Sbornik za Narodni Umotvoreniya*, 15, 1898, 230−231.

5 Nikola Nachov, "List ot khnonika, namerena v s. Golyamo Belovo," *Bilgarski pregled*, 5, 1898, 2, 149.

6 Khristo Kodov, *Opis na slavyanskite rikopisi v Bibliotekata na Bilgarskata Akademiya na Naukite*, Sofia, 1969, 256−258.

7 Petir Mutafchiev, *Stari gradishta i drumove iz dolinite na Strema i Topolnitsa* Sofia, 1915, 73−74. Reprinted in P. Mutafchiev, *Izbrani proizvedeniya*, I, Sofia, 1973, 366−367.

8 Petir Petrov, "Bilgarskite letopisni svedeniya za pomohamedanchvaneto v Chepino," *Rodopski sbornik*, I, Sofia, 1965.

9 Todorov, "Letopisniyat razkaz," 60−62, 77. Todorov also maintained that the Batkun chronicle was the earliest and, had its original been preserved, it would have been the closest

to the original version (written or oral) of the conversion story.

10 Ibid., 64, n.37.

11 *Bilgariya*, II, 91, 24 October 1860. While Zakhariev was the most likely author of this newspaper article, the context in which this legend appears leaves no doubt about its authenticity. It reports the visit of the Greek metropolitan Illarion in the town of Panagyurishte. When he admonished the flock to pay their church taxes, a peasant countered that he had heard from his grandmother and grandfather that a prelate like him had "turkified" with taxes the Bulgarians in Chepino, and that it seemed he was about to "turkify" them too with his zeal. One should be aware that in Bulgarian "turkify" has, besides the literal meaning of convert, also the idiomatic sense of ruin, devastate, destroy completely. In 1861, the Russian consul in Plovdiv Naiden Gerov replicated in one of his despatches the explanation that the Bulgarians of the Dospat region converted to Islam because of the unbearable pressure of their hierarchs. It is not clear whether he based this on the above−mentioned newspaper article or whether he was familiar with the legend (*Arkhiv na Naiden Gerov*, vol.1, Sofia: Bilgarska akademiya na naukite, 1931, 230).

12 Quoted in Todorov, "Letopisniyat razkaz," 60.

13 There is an abundant literature on the topic of which a few titles are worth mentioning here: Ian Haywood, *The Making of History: a Study of the Literary Forgeries of James Macpherson and Thomas Chatterton in Relation to Eighteeenth−Century Ideas of History and Fiction*, Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1986; Paul Lehmann, *Pseudo−antike Literatur des Mittelalters*, Leipzig, Berlin: B.G.Teubner, 1927; Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: a Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1988; Evgenii Lann, *Literaturnaya mistifikatsiia*, Moscow: Gosudarstvennoe isdatel'stvo, 1930; Edmund Kerchever Chamber, *The History and Motives of Literary Forgeries*, Norwood, Pa: Folcroft Library Editions, 1975; Joseph Rosenblum, *Practice to Deceive*, New Castle, Del.: Oak Knoll Press, 2000.

14 Stefan Verkovich, *Veda Slovena: bulgarski narodni pesni ot preistorichna i predkhristiyanska doba*, Belgrade, 1878; Alexander Chodzko, Etudes bulgares, Paris: E.Leroux, 1875; Mikhail Arnaudov, *Verkovich i Veda Slovena:prinos kim istoriyata na bilgarskiya folklor i na Bilgarskoto Vizrazhdane v Makedoniy, s neizvestni pisma, dokladi i dokumenti ot 1855 do 1893 godina*, Sofia: Bilgarska Akademiya na Naukite, 1968; Ivan Bogdanov, *Veda Slovena i nasheto vreme*, Sofia: Uiversitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv.Kliment Okhridski," 1991; Boris Khristov, ed., *Veda Slovena*, Sofia: Izdatelstvo "Otvoreno obshtestvo," 1997.

15 Elena Grozdanova, Stefan Andreev, "Falshifikat li e letopisniyat razkaz na pop Metodi Draginov?, " *Istoricheski pregled*, 1993, 2, 146−157. This article, while advancing some valuable empirical critiques of Iliya Todorov's analysis, does not address his main argument, and makes the totally unwarranted logical leap from an a priori assumption to presumed proof as far as the 17th−century authenticity is concerned.

16 In the same vein, Machiel Kiel ironically comments on the fact that, even as the chronicle of Metodi Draginov was exposed as a "forgery" or "mystification," the village Korova, the alleged birthplace of the fictitious Metodi Draginov, bears the name Draginovo since 1966 "commemorating a man who did not exist" (Machiel Kiel, "Razprostranenie na islyama v bilgarskoto selo prez osmanskata epokha (XV−XVIII v.): kolonizatsiya i islyamizatsiya," in: Rositsa Gradeva, Svetlana Ivanova, eds., *Myusulmanskata kultura po bilgarskite zemi. Izsledvaniya*, Sofia: Mezhdunaroden tsentir po problemite na maltsinstvata i kulturnite vzaimodeistviya, 1998, 82). Quite apart from the possible political repercussions, the fact that he "did not exist" is not in itself a reason to expunge him altogether from any mention. Do we have to rename Athens because the goddess Athena did not exist in reality?

17 erzy Topolski, "Historical Sources and the Access of the Historian to the Historical Reality," in T.N. Sevost'ianov, ed., *Problemy istoricheskogo poznaniia* (Problems of Historical Knowledge), Moscow: Nauka, 1999, 26. This volume with interesting papers from an international conference in Moscow is predominantly in Russian, with Topoloski's paper rendered, unfortunately, in very clumsy English.

18 Ibid., 30.

19 Jerzy Topolski, "A Non−Postmodernist Analysis of Historical Narratives," in Topolski, ed., *Historiography Bteween Modernism and Postmodernism*, Amsterdam, Atlanta, Ga: Rodopi, 1994, 30−71.

20 Petir Petrov, *Po sledite na nasilieto. Dokumenti i materiali za nalagane na islyama* (In the Traces of Violence. Documents and Materials About the Imposition of Islam), Part I, Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1987; first edition: *Po sledite na nasilieto. Dokumenti i materiali za pomokhamednchvaniya i poturchvaniya* (In the Traces of Violence. Documents About Islamization and Tukification),, Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1972).

21 Ibid., 150−151.

22 Petir Petrov, *Po sledite na nasilieto. Dokumenti i materiali za nalagane na islyama*, Part II, Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1988, 357−358.

23 See Maria Todorova, "Identity (Trans)formation Among Pomaks in Bulgaria," Laszlo Kürti & Juliet Langman, eds., *Beyond Borders*, Boulder, Co: Westview Press, 1997, 63−82; B. Aleksiev, "Rodorpskoto naselenie v bilgarskata humanitaristika," in: *Myusyulmanskite obshtnosti na Balkanite i v Bilgariya*, Sofia, 1997.

24 Ömer Lûtfi Barkan, "Osmanli imparatorlugunda bir iskan ve kolonizasyon metodu olarak sürgünler", Istanbul Üniversitesi Iktisat Fakültesi Mecmuasi, 11, 13, 15, 1949−1951; "Rumeli'nin iskani icin yapilan sürgünler", Istanbul Üniversitesi Iktisat Fakültesi Mecmuasi, 13, 1950; M. Tayyib Gökbilgin, Rumeli'de Yürükler, Tatarlar ve Evlad−i Fatihan, Istanbul, 1957. I wish to thank Cemal Kafadar for pointing out to me that Turkish historiography itself is not unanimous on this issue, and that there had been an interesting internal debate, specifically around the activities of Sari Saltuk, and whether he had arrived in the Balkans in the company of other Anatolian Turks, or whether his followers were converted Balkan Christians. While this information enriches our view of Turkish historiography, it does not change the initial mutual perception of Balkan and Turkish historiography in which the polemical stance originated.

25 Strashimir Dimitrov, "Za yurushkata organizatsiya i rolyata ï v etnoasimilatsionnite protsesi," Vekove, 1982, 1−2; Nikolay Todorov, Asparukh Velkov, *Situation démographique de la péninsule balkanique* (fin du XVe s. début du XVIe s.), Sofia, 1988; Antonijevic D., "Prilog proucavanju stocarskih migracija na Balkanu," Balcanica, 1976; Marie Mathilde Alexandresku−Derska Bulgaru, "La politique démographique des sultans à Istanbul (1453−1496)," *Revue des études sud−est européennes*, XXVIII, 1−4, Bucarest, 1990, 45−56; for a critical view, see Machiel Kiel, "La diffusion de l'Islam dans les campagnes bulgares à l'époque ottomane. Colonisation et conversion," in: *Revue du monde musulman et la Méditerranée*, 66, 1993/94, 39−54.

26 Elena Grozdanova, *Bilgarskata narodnost prez XVII vek. Demografsko izsledvane*, Sofia, 1989; Strashimir Dimitrov, "Demografski otnosheniya i pronikvane na islyama v Zapadnite Rodopi i dolinata na Mesta prez XV−XVII b.," *Rodopski sbornik*, I, 1965, 63−114; Strashimir Dimitrov, "Nyakoi problemi na etnicheskite i islyamizatsionnite protsesi v bilgarskite zemi prez XV−XVII b," in: *Problemi na razvitieto na bilgarskata narodnost i natsiya*, Sofia: Bilgarska akademiya na naukite, 1988; Antonina Zhelyazkova, *Razprostranenie na islyama v zapadnobulgarskite zemi pod osmanska vlast, XV−XVIII vek*, Sofia: Bilgarska akademiya na naukite, 1990; Sami Pulaha, *Aspects de démographie historique des contrées albanais pendant les XVe−XVIe siècles*, Tirana, 1984; M. Sokoloski, "Islamizatsija u Makedonija u XV i XVI veku", Istorijski _asopis, 1975, 22; for the earlier period, see Speros Vryonis, *The Decline of Medieval Hellenism in Asia Minor and the Process of Islamization from the Eleventh through the Fifteenth Centuries*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971.

27 An intense discussion which defined opposing approaches and interpretations raged in the early 1970s around the issue of the demographic consequences of the Ottoman conquest (Khristo Gandev, *Bilgarskata narodnost prez XV vek*, Sofia: Nauka i izkustvo, 1972, with critical reviews of Strashimir Dimitrov, "Mezrite i demografskiya kolaps na bilgarskata narodnost prez XV vek," Vekove, 1973, 6, 50−65, Vera Mutafchieva, "Za tochnite metodi v istoricheskata demografiya," *Istoricheski pregled*, 1973, 4, 134−141, and others). Another exchange concerned the authenticity of the so−called *Istoricheski belezhnik* (Historical diary), a later counterpart of the Draginov chronicle (Nikolay Khaitov, "Rodopskata istoriya v nyakoi statii i knigi na prof. Petrov" and Petir Petrov, "Predizvikan otgovor," *Istoricheski pregled*, 1977, 2, 103−109; G. Kuzmanov, "Istoricheski dokument li e Istoricheskiyat belezhnik?" and P.Marinov, :Istini i zabludi," Rodopi, 1977, 11, 26−32. For an example of the different assessment of the period, one can compare *Istoriya na Bilgariya*, vol. 4 (Sofia, 1983 covering the 15th to the 18th centuries and edited by Bistra Tsvetkova) and vol. 5 (Sofia, 1985 on the 18th to the middle of the 19th centuries, under the editorship of Strashimir Dimitrov and Nikolay Todorov). For a general assessment , see Maria Todorova, "The Ottoman Legacy in the Balkans," *Imperial Legacy: The Ottoman Imprint in the Balkans and the Middle East*, ed. L. Carl Brown, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995, 45−77, as well as "Bulgarian Historical Writings on the Ottoman Empire," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, No.12, Spring 1995, which is an abbreviated but updated version of "Die Osmanenzeit in der Bulgarischen Geschichtsschreibung seit der Unabhängigkeit," *Die Staaten Südosteuropas und die Osmanen*, Hrsg. Hans Georg Majer, München: Selbstverlag der Südosteuropa−Gesellschaft, 1989, 127−161.

28 Michiel Kiel, who otherwise praises Iliya Todorov's work for having shown that the language of the document is from the 19th century, seems not to have actually read it. Otherwise, he would not have attributed the comparative historical analysis of Todorov who pointed out both the anti−Greek tenor of the chronicle and situated it in the context of

European romanticism, to Antonina Zhelyazkova who, writing in 1990, endorsed and popularized Iliya Todorov's original argumentation (Kiel, "Razprostranenie na islyama ," 67). Zhelyazkova's article is "The Problem of the Authenticity of Some Domestic Sources on the Islamisation of the Rhodopes, Deeply Rooted in Bulgarian Historiography," *Etudes balkaniques*, 1990, 4, 105−111.

29 An example of this is the tiny 33−page booklet *Archives Speak Volumes* (Sofia: Sofia Press, 1986).

30 Maria Kalitsin, Asparukh Velkov, Evgenii Radushev, *Osmanski izvori za islyamizatsionnite protsesi na Balkanite* (XVI−XIX v.), Seriya izvori − 2, Sofia: Bilgarska akademiya na naukite, 1990 (the volume had been completed and in print before the political changes at the end of 1989).

31 Strashimir Dimitrov, "Predgovor," in: *Osmanski izvori za islyamizatsionnite protsesi*, 11, and document 7 (there is also a French introduction to the volume, 23−42).

32 Ibid., 8. The phrase 'under the influence of Islam and the Turkish milieu' is a quote but Dimitrov does not indicate its source. In the Bulgarian original "Turkish milieu" is rendered as "Turkism" which does not have the same connotation as in English. I have, therefore, in this case used the French translation of Dimitrov's preface which the author supervised himself: "Je n'ai pas calculé le nombre exact des ulüfeciyan, qui, suivant des indications, devaient être d'origin bulgare, albanaise, serbe, grecque, hongrois, etc. D'autres vont sans doute le faire, mais cela ne nous empêche pas de voir que nous sommes en presence d'un système fonctionnant en permanence, dans l'objectif d'absorber des gens de différentes provinces et nationalités se trouvant 'sous l'influence de l'Islam et du milieu turc.'" (26).

33 Ibid., 17, and documents 16, 232.

34 The beauty of the proposition lies, of course, also in the fact that it can equally well counteract the opposing interpretation, which I have heard from Turkish or Western Ottomanists who prefer to take the petitions of the past as literal proofs of zealousness and enthusiasm on the part of the new converts. Do we have to apply the same literal reading to the "petitions" of the hundreds of thousands of ethnic Turks at the end of the 20th century?

35 Evgenii Radushev, "Demografski i etnoreligiozni protsesi v zapadnite Rodopi prez XV−XVIII vek (Opit za preosmislyane na ustoichivi istoriografski modeli), *Istorichesko bideshte*, 1, 1998, 48. See also Evgenii Radushev and Rumen Kovachev, *Opis na registri ot Istanbulskiya osmanski arkhiv kim Generalnata direktsiya na dirzhavnite arkhivi na Republika Turtsiya*, Sofia: Narodn biblioteka "Sv.sv. Kiril i Metodii," 1996.

36 Kiel, "Razprostranenie na islyama ," 66. Kiel refers to the work of Strashimir Dimitrov cited in note 26 above.

37 One should not be tempted, however, to overgeneralize on this score outside the particular geographic area of Nevrokop. Kiel, "Razprostranenie na islyama ," 61, 81, demonstrates the continued and significant presence of *yürük* in other regions of the Rhodopes, particularly in the valley between Ksanti and Komotini, as well as in the Chepino region.

38 The above−mentioned volume, *Myusulmanskata kultura*, offers two articles by Harry T. Norris in translation as well as other contributions on heterodox Islam in the Balkans by Nathalie Clayer, Nevena Gramatikova, Lyubomir Mikov, and Valeri Grigorov. For an interesting assessment of the collaboration of Ottoman elites with Muslim orders, and the role of mystical Islam in the conquest of the Balkans, see Balivet, Michel, "'Le saint turc chez les infidèles': thème hagiographique or péripétie historique de l'islamisation du sud−est européen?, in: Aigle, Denise, ed., *Saints orientaux*, Paris: De Boccard, 1995, 211−223, and Balivet, Michel, "Aux origines de l'islamisation des Balkans ottomans," *Revue du monde musulman et de la Méditerrannée*, 66, 1992, 11−20.

39 To his credit, Machiel Kiel stresses the fact that Ottoman sources cannot enlighten us about the motives for conversions or resistance to Islam ("Razprostranenie na islyama ," 81). At the same time, he cannot resist to suggest several possibilities, among others the "fashion" over Islam in the 16th century (76) which does not seem too convincing in the village setting.

40 The book was almost immediately translated into English, and published first in England (1967) and then in the United States (1968): Anton Donchev, *Time of Parting*, trans. Marguerite Alexieva, New York: William Morrow & Company, 1968.

41 I thought this was the case when I read the book as a teenager, and still think so, although my ability to consume earnest romantic literature without the antidose of parody and humor has seriously depleted with age. Of the other writers of historical fiction, I would single out Dimitir Talev, Emiliyan Stanev, and Vera Mutafchieva. Anton Donchev himself is the author of several other historical novels covering mostly the Bulgarian medieval period: *Stranniyat ritsar na sveshtenata kniga, Nachaloto na nashata vechnost: krayat na skzanieto za khan Asparukh, kniaz Slav i zhretsa Teres, Skazanie za vremeto na Samuila, Legendi za dvete sikrovishta*.

[42] For several recent publications which interpret the history of the Bulgarian Turks from different, even opposing historical perspectives, see Valeri Stoyanov, *Turskoto naselenie na Bilgariya mezhdu polyusite na etnicheskata politika*, Sofia: Lik, 1998; Kristyo Petkov, Georgi Fotev, *Etnicheskiyat konflikt v Bilgariya, 1989: sotsiologicheski arkhiv*, Sofia: Profizdat, 1990; Boncho Asenov, *Vizroditelniyat protses i Dirzhavna sigurnost*, Sofia: s.n., 1996; Orlin Zagorov, *Vizroditelniyat protses: teza, antiteza, otritsanie na otritsanieto*, Sofia: s.n., 1993.

[43] Vera Mutafchieva, *Sluchayat Dzhem*, Varna: Izdatelstvo "Georgi Bakalov," 1967 and many subsequent editions.

[44] Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis. An Essay on the Organization of Experience*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974, 45.

[45] Marc Ferro, *Cinema and History*, trans. Naomi Greene, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1988, 29; Robert A. Rosenstone,, "Introduction," in: Robert A. Rosenstone,, ed., *Revisioning History: Film and the Construction of a New Past*, Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995.

[46] Robert A. Rosenstone, *Visions of the Past: The Challenge of Film to Our Idea of History*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995, 237.

[47] Most of the information in this paragraph comes from interviews with Momchil Karamitev, the actor who plays Momchil in the film. He resides nowadays in the United States, and is trying to pursue a career in the Hollywood area.

[48] According to Momchil Karamitev, there was an incident when, at one point, members of what he called "the Turkish movement" had stolen part of the negative of the film which was preserved at the Boyana studios, and it had to be restored. I have not checked on this story which sounds a bit farfetched but it gives at least an idea about the atmosphere surrounding the release.

[49] There had been negotiations with Paramount or Columbia for its release in the United States but, according to Karamitev, they fell through, mostly because of the ineptitude of the Bulgarian negotiators (again, unchecked information).

[50] The film had as historical consultants the university professor Tsvetana Georgieva, herself the author of works on the Janissaries but not implicated in the campaign, and nowadays a spokesperson for and practitioner of a non−nationalist historiography; General Atanas Semerdzhiev, and two historians Ganka Mikhailova and Khristo Dermendzhiev.

[51] Dina Iordanova in her review article "Conceptualizing the Balkans in Film," *Slavic Review*, 55, 4, Winter 1996, 882−890, does not find it even worth mentioning "Time of Violence" among the half dozen Bulgarian films.

[52] Mark Carnes, ed., *Past Imperfect. History According to the Movie*s, New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1995, 23.

[53] Erving Goffman explains that definitions of a situation are built up in accordance with principles of organization which govern events − at least social ones − and our subjective involvement in them, and he uses the word frame to refer to these basic elements (Goffman, *Frame Analysis*, 11).

[54] Kerwin Lee Klein, "On the Emergence of *Memory* in the Historical Discourse," Representations, 69, 2000, 129.

[55] David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1985, 194.

[56] Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, New York: Harper Colophon, 1980, 22−30, 53.

[57] Amos Funkenstein, *Perceptions of Jewish History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993, cited in Kerwin Klein, "On the Emergence," 133.

[58] Thomas W. Laqueur, "Introduction,"*Representations*, 69, 2000, n

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